



## **Envision Arlington Diversity Task Group**

Date: September 14, 2023

Time: 6:45 pm - 9:00 pm (official meeting start at 7PM)

Remote Participation, via Zoom

**Attendees:** Elizabeth Dray, Lenard Diggins, Mona Mandal, Michele Oshima, Jane Flores, Stephanie Ettinger de Cuba, Sarah McKinnon, Lousie Popkin, Katell Guellec

**Facilitator:** Michèle Oshima

**Minutes:** Katell Guellec

## **Minutes**

- 1. Land Acknowledgement was read and participants checked in.**
- 2. August meeting minutes approved**
- 3. Welcome back from summer hiatus (Michèle)**
- 4. Land acknowledgement will be updated (Michèle)**
- 5. Approve the previous minutes (Michèle)**
- 6. DTG Table at Arlington Town Day: Sept 23 (Jane and Mona)**
  - We are there every year as part of Envision Arlington's task groups. Help still needed for 12:30-2:30 (2) and 2:30-4:30 (1). Discussed splitting up shifts into one-hour stints, as two hours can be long.
  - We have a one-pager on DTG for the bulletin board as well as handouts and a sign-up sheet.
  - Interactive component: engaging people with a question about how they envision a more diverse Arlington, and then a word cloud will be created as we did last year. Can use the word cloud on the DTG Facebook page.
  - Will want to email the DTG mailing list when Rebecca is back as she is the only one with access to the gmail account.
- 7. Update on discussion w/ Scott Jones, Bedford Police in the Fall 2023 (Jane)**
  - Scott Jones is a member of Jane's church. He would be happy to talk with DTG about his role as a Bedford police officer and someone who has done work in

restorative justice. He also is on the HRC. He can join a meeting this fall, and we will find a time that works for him.

- A motion was passed to invite Mr Jones to a meeting this fall.

## **8. Building coalition with other groups - continued discussion (Elizabeth)**

- Continuing discussion from last meeting.
- One way of building bridges has been to invite a speaker. Gives them a voice in a group that is interested in DEI issues.
- Possible groups -- for many of these, we could share each other's information to publicize events and activities:
  - Some groups that have been less represented at our meetings, such as tenant's groups.
  - Similar groups in other towns
  - ArCS: refugee resettlement (Arlington/Cambridge/Somerville). Could invite a refugee who has resettled in Arlington.
  - Religious groups: a caution was raised to be mindful of the stance of various institutions and that we should reach out in a careful and thoughtful manner. One topic that would be interesting to hear about a California bill that would redefine "ancestry" to include "lineal descent, heritage, parentage, caste, or any inherited social status."
  - Arlington Community Orchard is a loosely organized effort to run an edible orchard and herb garden, hold events, and educate about agriculture. Under the sponsorship of [Home Harvest](#).
  - Caste discussion may be possible. Could afford crossover with the Social Justice Book Club.
  - Disability Commission: Mona has a connection to invite to our meeting and possible collaborations.
  - It would be helpful to hear from other groups (e.g., Rainbow Commission) how they have grown over time.
- **Action Item:** People have put down their names in various areas of interest. These could become smaller subcommittees that meet to create further plans of action. **See table below -- individuals will be in touch with each other and will start creating lists of people who we want to reach out to and invite to future meetings.**

## **9. ARCDTG Mission/Goals (Lenard)**

- A goal would be to reach out to Menotomy Manor and Arlington Housing Authority. Len is happy to make these connections, reaching out to tenant associations and thereby to residents. Suggests inviting people into our meetings and going to them. Learn from them what they would like to present. There is diversity between groups and within groups. Allow time to go into more depth with a speaker.

## **10. Revisit the survey questions from the Envision Arlington Standing Committee (Lenard)**

These questions are being asked of each Envision Arlington task group, and the hope is to have them done by the end of the year. Framing for conversation: We would like to get a better idea about the work your group is doing and finding ways that we can support your efforts.

### **1. How would you describe the mission and purpose of your task group?**

From the Town Day flyer: Fostering awareness, community, and action on diversity issues and creating inclusive and safe spaces where all are welcome.

- Create a Government and civic sector partnership monthly breakfast/town diversity advisory council (invite cultural niches, inter-faith communities, recovery groups, other civic groups) to collaborate, advise, report, guide decisions affecting community values of equity and inclusion and to be called on in times of crisis.
- Support the drafting of town warrants for a civilian review board, fair housing commission.
- Engage the community and share community experiences of overt, covert, and unconscious racism in Arlington through monthly book discussions, hosting town department leaders at DTG, inviting trainers and performances with community and neighboring community partners.
- Support our schools - Diversity Inclusion Groups, the Superintendents Diversity Advisory Committee, and METCO program.
- Meetings are usually the 2nd Monday at 7 pm, see website for details.

### **2. Around which issues or topics is your task group most active?**

The Diversity Task Group (DTG) is a group of Arlington residents who are committed to making our town inclusive; to fostering awareness, community and action; and to creating a space where all voices are welcome.

Our members are engaged in dozens of DEI-related organizations and efforts in town. Bringing our diverse backgrounds and experiences, we meet monthly to engage, share and educate ourselves, operating under our member-agreed-upon guidelines for respectful dialogue. In between meetings, we connect regularly with email communications about Town and regional issues and events of interest.

### **3. What are your group's recent or upcoming milestones on these issues or topics?**

Throughout the year, DTG invites representatives of Town organizations and committees with potential DEI influence and impact to share and discuss with our members. Special guests in

2022 included: Arlington Veterans' Services Director, Jeff Chunglo; Housing Plan Implementation Committee member and Arlington Housing Trust Fund Chair, Karen Kelleher; Kristine Shah, Executive Director of Arlington's Council on Aging; Steven Prochet, Robbins Library Local History Librarian regarding the digitization of the Historical Arlington Newspapers Collection; Jillian Harvey, DEI Director and Teresa Marzilli, Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator.

During 2022, the Diversity Task Group membership:

- Authored various letters of support, including: a letter to the Select Board regarding the display of the Black Lives Matter banner on Town Hall; with the Arlington Human Rights Commission and the Rainbow Commission, a statement regarding the war in Ukraine; a letter in support of the Civilian Police Advisory Board Study Committee's warrant article to form a Civilian Police Advisory Board; a letter in support of a Town Meeting Resolution to increase diversity in Town appointments.
- Participated in the selection of the Arlington Reads Together title for 2022, and supported the Library in communicating events around the Program. DTG is the founder and a lead contributor to Arlington Reads Together
- Partnered with Robbins Library to start a bi-monthly Social Justice Book Club to which all members of the community are welcome. Book Club title selections are announced in the Robbins Library monthly newsletter and through DTG communications.
- Following conversations at DTG meetings, community members authored two amendments to the warrant article to form a Civilian Police Advisory Board. Both amendments were voted affirmatively by Town Meeting.
- Represented the Diversity Task Group at the Envision Arlington tent at Town Day. In support of Town Day, we updated our website; re-activated our Facebook page, which we now update regularly; created a "Welcome to DTG" flyer; and facilitated an activity to engage the community in a conversation about diversity.
- Started our participation in the Remote Participation Study Committee's pilot, including identifying processes and procedures for DTG meetings in a hybrid format.

4. How well does your group's mission link to the EA mission as you see it?

5. How well is your task group connection to EA known among task group members?

6. What is your current number of people attending your meetings? Ideal size?

7. How do you engage and communicate with people attending task group meetings?

8. How do you recruit members?

9. How could we better support your task group?

- Clarify the role of Envision Arlington with DTG. In the past, this hasn't always been clear or how much oversight EA wants over the task groups. Are the expectations the same across all the task groups?
- Len clarified that all task groups have been asked to do this, but there is no requirement or expectation. This is intended to help EA determine what it wants to be and next steps, including the role of staff.

- How do you engage with people who do not participate at the task group meetings?

## 11. Discussion

- Update on Police Civilian Advisory Committee: We will invite Rev. Erica, our nominee, to give an update in the spring.
- Sunday 9/17, 1pm, Harvard Sq: Justice for Faisal Rally and Speakout.

Goal	Lead/Subcommittee people
Building bridges	Jane, Kellye, Mona, Katell
Book Group	Kellye
Working with AHR	Laurie, Katell
Social justice book club	Rebecca
Newsletter/social media	Rebecca
Town Day	Lynette, Jane, Mona*
Structure map	Sarah, Elizabeth